



**ST. PATRICK  
PARISH**  
Bridge Avenue

Building with Living Stones  
General Summary of Phase III Survey  
Fall 2021 – Winter 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Saint Patrick Parish conducted a survey as part of Phase III of our 2021-2022 *Building with Living Stones* initiative. The survey instrument was based upon listening sessions conducted from April to June, 2021 (Phase II). Six small groups contributed to these conversations (nearly 70 people in total) which were rooted in the United States Catholic Conference's document, *Living as Missionary Disciples*. This primary document was used to shape the conversations around the themes of *Encounter, Accompany, Community, and Sending*. At the end of June 2021, the leaders of these groups gathered with me to reflect on what was heard in those sessions.

The survey instrument, designed by Watt + Company, LLC, and based upon the Phase II listening sessions, focused on the following areas of parish life:

- Welcome & Community
- Liturgy & Worship
- Faith Formation & Sacramental Preparation
- Social Concerns & Outreach
- Leadership
- Communication
- Life with Covid

Over 401 individuals opened the survey instrument while it was available on the parish website. There were 246 surveys partially completed and 111 individuals actually completed the instrument. The average time ranged from an average of 15 minutes to nearly 41 minutes, depending upon an individual's level of engagement. In other words, some participants may have simply utilized the numerical rating portion while others offered in-depth commentary. Regarding the survey instrument itself, participants were invited to offer commentary if they ranked an item with a score of 2 or lower. Therefore, many of these comments were prompted because a participant expressed concern. Other comments, whether positive or negative, were invited at the conclusion of each section of the survey.

**Welcome & Community** – On this topic, survey participants offered mixed reviews. General consensus is that *our parish is a warm and welcoming* community but may struggle with embracing change or new membership or even new leadership. A high value was placed on ***engaging parishioners before and after Mass. Social interaction*** (eg. coffee and donuts) are seen as important opportunities to welcome and engage one another. Overall, the desire for even ***more engagement*** was voiced, both for parishioners themselves and with neighbors / friends of the parish. ***Accessibility regarding mobility, hearing, and vision*** were also mentioned as opportunities (or challenges) for welcoming people to participate in worship and other parish events on our grounds.

**Liturgy & Worship** is highly valued by many survey respondents. While the spectrum of style preferences was expressed, the majority of those surveyed cited a strong desire to ***connect liturgy to their lived experiences***. This would include the homily, music, and overall spirit of the Mass.

Regarding the *homily*, a number of respondents appreciate the present styles of preaching while others prefer more practical connections to daily life and events; they also cherish stories and anecdotal narrative to make these connections. Other aspects of liturgy, especially the *Universal Prayers* (General Intercessions / Petitions), are appreciated when they lift up specific events and issues. *Music* is also a very important priority for many respondents. While style preferences differ, music selections and efforts are appreciated. However, some expressed a desire for more organized leadership among musicians and additional selections of music across the weekend experience. Many respondents appreciated the need for training and recruiting of every liturgical ministry. Regarding environment, many responses cited the need for an enhanced *sound system*. It appears that people of varying levels of hearing ability struggle with the sound system. When addressing *air quality/temperature*, many comments indicated dissatisfaction with the extreme heat or lack of circulation (especially in light of Covid concerns).

**Faith Formation & Sacramental Preparation** - Among respondents who addressed children and youth *faith formation*, many comments expressed gratitude for the efforts being made, especially during Covid. Respondents cited a need for a diverse range of perspectives when it comes to complex issues and Church teaching. *Engaging the youth* was also a concern for many of those surveyed, especially high school youth. Regarding *Adult Faith Formation*, efforts are appreciated but some respondents believe that the topics selected are too narrow in focus and do not address the wide range of contemporary topics. Others expressed a desire to have opportunities for *engaging conversation* and exploring topics through Q & A. Several suggestions as to how this might be done were also cited.

**Social Concerns & Outreach** - Survey participants strongly value *service to the poor and marginalized*, both within our parish and throughout the broader community. Many acknowledge the curbing of these activities due to Covid but would like to see a recommitment to the various areas of outreach, including *Charity of the Month*, feeding the hungry, and providing essential items to those in need. Communication of these opportunities to serve and participate are also highly valued and many respondents expressed a desire to be more involved. Other support programs, such as *AA or NA*, are little known among those surveyed. Additional comments addressed the need for further *justice advocacy* (eg. *racism, immigration, sexism, environment, etc.*) and awareness initiatives in the parish. Interest was expressed regarding *outreach to Afghan families* and the need to *sustain support for our Liberian families*. The survey also suggested an interest in *assisting at-risk mothers and their children* as well as advocating for victims of *human trafficking*. The suggestion to form a Social Concerns committee was offered by several respondents.

**Parish Leadership** - Regarding the sense of *transparency*, many survey participants expressed a desire for more information from parish leadership (staff and councils), including *summaries of meetings and decisions*. Furthermore, concerns were raised about *channels of communication* between parish leaders and the general community. Concerns regarding *timely responses and accessing the pastor and other members of staff* were also noted. Several suggestions were made as to how clarity of roles and channels for communicating might occur. Both the Parish and Finance Councils are seen as significant groups for parish leadership. Again, the desire for more information about and from these groups was expressed by survey respondents.

**Communication** – There was a wide-range of feedback from survey participants. While several commended the communication efforts, other participants believe that much work needs to be done in this area. Concerns raised included *accessibility of staff members and parish group leaders, the need for a parish leadership directory, opportunities for shared conversation, increased efforts to educate general parish population on parish activity and finances*, and overall efforts to share information. Participants also noted improvements such as the parish website and parish bulletin in recent years.

**Life with Covid** – This was an important component of the survey, based on the listening sessions in Phase II of our *Building with Living Stones* initiative. Respondents’ attitude toward the *parish’s handling of Covid was overall positive*. However, several respondents expressed *reservation about participating in Mass and other events* at the time the survey was conducted. A number of comments expressed specific *concern for children who were not yet vaccinated*. Several respondents were disappointed when the government – and the diocese – relaxed the *policy of mandatory masks during liturgy and while on parish grounds*. Others were relieved that the mask mandate was lifted. People appreciate the *special areas for social distancing* in the church building but some have expressed concern about coming to church at this present time. Additional comments from some of the respondents expressed the *challenges of living out daily life as Covid continues*.

### Nest Steps

As we respond to these survey results and the general themes raised, it is my intention to have each section of this survey distributed to the parish group(s) responsible for a given area of leadership. Each group will receive the comments specific to its area of service and will be invited to explore ways to respond. A response to a particular concern may be to simply change a procedure while another item may require further reflection and conversation. It is my hope that each group is able to address these concerns and then offer concrete strategies as we move forward. I will rely upon our Parish Council membership – including its five new members – to oversee the progress of these strategies, keeping the general parish community well informed.

With heartfelt thanks to Christy Bartley, our Parish Communications Coordinator, Mr. Ron Watt and his associates, our staff and Parish Council members, and all those who gave hours of their time and energy in creating a foundation for the survey instrument through the listening sessions, I am hopeful and energized that what we’ve learned will move us forward as a family of faith. Although any such instrument has its limitations, I believe this survey provides an important opening as we invite further reflection and conversation on the life and mission of Saint Patrick Parish. May we grow in faith, hope, and charity as we continue to *Build with Living Stones as Missionary Disciples* here in Ohio City!

Sincerely yours in Christ Our Cornerstone,



Fr. Michael K. Gurnick  
Pastor